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AUTHOR Feir, Robert E.
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ABSTRACT

While history helps to trace the development of the American public school as a bureaucratic institution and the role of teachers within that institution, a more sociological view helps to clarify the authority relationships within the school and the teacher's role within that structure. It is the teacher's willingness to claim autonomy based solely upon the ability to make instructional decisions in a single classroom, in isolation from colleagues, that helps reinforce the bureaucratic school structure and the teacher's own very limited role in the school's authority structure. Decisions are made by those in management positions, but teachers do not work together to evolve curricular or other school-wide decisions. This results in the teacher becoming more an alienated worker in the system than an independent professional. Since the schools attract few teachers who desire to participate in the life of the school, it is easy for the school to establish a reward structure that strengthens the institutional hierarchy. Teachers should engage in a great deal of job-related discussion and share in decisions regarding instructional programs and curricula. To the degree that this participation does not take place, the institution is deprived of the collective wisdom of its members, and each of its members is deprived of the opportunity to develop professionally. (JD)

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THE STRUCTURE OF SCHOOL: TEACHERS AND AUTHORITY

Robert E. Feir

Pennsylvania Department of Education

This paper was prepared for presentation to the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Chicago, April 2, 1985

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THE STRUCTURE OF SCHOOL: TEACHERS AND AUTHORITY*

Robert E. Feir**

Introduction

During the past couple of years, American public education has been treated to a veritable orgy of reports, commentaries, critiques, reappraisals and recommendations for reform (e.g., Adler, 1982; Boyer, 1983; College Board, 1983; Commission on Precollege Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology, 1983; Goodlad, 1983; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Sizer, 1984; Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, 1984; Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Policy, 1984).

While the reports approach public education from various perspectives and contain different emphases, some common themes emerge. Most of the reports concentrate on the need for schools to increase the difficulty, but not necessarily the complexity, of the curriculum; to place more emphasis on core academic subjects and greater stress on mathematics, science, and technology; to adhere to common, and some might say limited,

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**-Robert E. Feir is coordinator of state legislative relations for the Pennsylvania Department of Education. He has been a school district curriculum coordinator and assistant executive director of a regional educational service agency. Neither this paper nor the views it expresses are intended to represent the Pennsylvania Department of Education or the Secretary of Education. They are solely the responsibility of the author.

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objectives; to add to the nation's competitive capability in a fast-changing technological world; and to improve the quality of teaching in order to achieve all the other purposes.

Stress on the importance of teaching varies among the reports and the national reaction to the reports (U.S. Department of Education, 1984). Many states, however, have undertaken specific actions in recent months aimed at upgrading the quality of public school teachers (Bridgman, 1985). For the most part, these efforts have been aimed at recruitment and retention of "better" teachers. Such attempts include increasing teacher salaries, experimenting with more elongated career ladders, requiring new teachers to pass competency tests prior to certification, and providing new teachers with more formalized assistance in their first year as professionals.

These efforts to recruit and retain better teachers are, for the most part, extrinsic in nature, focusing on qualifications and preparation of and remuneration for teachers. Of seemingly less concern are more intrinsic reward issues, which might also help to recruit and retain higher quality teachers.

This paper is not aimed at reviewing specific school reform reports or state and local responses to those reports. It takes the reports and responses as a current backdrop, a reflection of nationwide concern over the quality of schooling and those most responsible for its provision -- classroom teachers. While those reform efforts are often concerned with the quality of the teaching corps, its academic preparation and apti-

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tudes, its induction into the nation's classrooms, and its instructional techniques, this paper attempts to be more narrow in scope and, at the same time, to push beyond those current concerns.

The purpose of the paper is to examine, both historically and sociologically, the teacher's role in the authority structure of American public schools. The thesis presented here is that the authority structure of the school and the teacher's predetermined role in that structure significantly affect the recruitment of teachers, who, once recruited, serve to reinforce dialectically the existing authority structure. Who is recruited to and who is retained in the teaching profession are affected by and in turn affect the structure of the school -- as a place of work and a place of learning.

After examining briefly the historical development of the structure of public schools, the paper will attempt to look at the structure sociologically. Finally, through the perspective of organization theory, and specifically organization development theory, the paper will attempt to assess the health of the profession and of the structure of schools.

Historical Developments

Early colonial schools were primarily local institutions of civic and religious character, established by the community's leading citizens to provide a relatively new kind of socialization for their children in the seemingly unique world on this side of the Atlantic (Butts and Cremin,

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1953; Cremin, 1970; Elsbree, 1939). Teachers were usually men, serving part-time and rarely for very long. They took teaching jobs while waiting to be called to the ministry or some other occupation for which they really aspired, and good moral character was a primary requisite (Butts and Cremin, 1953; Lortie, 1975).

Teaching did not pay well, and teachers often were assigned to such other "duties as cleaning out the church, ringing the bell, providing a baptismal basin, running errands, serving as messenger, and digging graves . . ." (Butts and Cremin, 1953, p. 135).

The schools of the early colonial period were not significantly differentiated internally. What today is thought of as bureaucracy (more on this below) was virtually nonexistent in the colonial school. Local authorities hired the teacher and tried to monitor his behavior directly. The local teacher was **the** teacher. Few schools had more than a single class or a single teacher, and fewer had anything that would resemble modern school administration (Elsbree, 1939; Lortie, 1975). While the teacher technically had no protection from the local "board of visitors," which could fire him just as it had hired him, the oversight function usually amounted to little more than "superficial appraisal" (Elsbree, 1939, p. 71).

Despite the part-time, short-term, low-paid nature of colonial teaching, and despite the teacher's serving at the pleasure of local officials, Elsbree (1939) and Lortie (1975) both paint a picture of the early teacher as experiencing his position as one of considerable autonomy.

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This autonomy, or seeming autonomy, will recur as a theme in the history of American public school teaching and in our sociological review of the profession's recruitment patterns.

The first significant historical shift took place from about 1820 to the period of the Civil War. During this time, elementary school teaching became largely the domain of unskilled young women. According to Butts and Cremin (1953), this shift reflected the Jacksonian belief that any citizen could hold any public position, as well as the Jacksonian belief in the spoils system, especially during the early stages of urbanization. In addition, women were generally willing to work for less than men (Butts and Cremin, 1953, pp. 283-284). The social status of teaching, which was not high to begin with, suffered further in this period, in which salaries were low, turnover high, and qualifications very limited. Further, the practice of requiring young women teachers to board in succession with different local families reduced any claim they might have had to professionalism (Butts and Cremin, 1953, p. 285). "The tradition of schoolkeeping rather than schoolteaching was strongly implanted. The teacher's job was to keep order -- to keep the class intact" (Butts and Cremin, 1953, p. 286).

Rapid growth in public schools and development of the teaching profession occurred between the Civil War and the turn of the twentieth century (Butts and Cremin, 1953; Lortie, 1975; Sykes, 1983; Tyack, 1967). The growth reflected population growth, urbanization, industrialization, and immigration, the great forces shaping the country at the time (Tyack, 1967).

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Tyack points to the late nineteenth century as a time of increased standardization, professionalization, and bureaucratization in the schools. He indicates that ". . . schools became increasingly mechanized and structured like the large bureaucracies of industry, commerce, and the military that were arising in this age of consolidation" (1967, p. 314).

Among the most significant developments (for purposes of this paper) were the increase in the number of teachers, the development of multiple-classroom school buildings with several teachers and at least a rudimentary administrative structure, the development of normal schools and the increased professionalization of teacher training, and the emergence of state-centralized teacher certification procedures (Butts and Cremin, 1953; Tyack, 1967). Despite these developments, Sykes (1983, p. 88) notes that

> teachers gave up income and advancement opportunities in return for the fulfillment of ideals related to service, a convenient work schedule, and a certain esteem (albeit shadowed) tendered by the community.

These themes will also be seen to recur in the development of the profession and its patterns of recruitment, reward, and retention.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, education followed the scientific management movement that was sweeping American industry (Callahan, 1962; Tyack, 1967). Administrators, hired on the basis of competence and merit as part of a general effort to clean up

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public service, proliferated. And they imposed on teachers a regimen of control based upon scientific management. The bureaucratization of public schools, at least in urban areas, was in full swing, and teachers, in contrast to the autonomy of their colonial forebears, were subjected to the most effective administrative control in the nation's history (Lortie, 1975; Elsbree, 1939). "Teachers became employees supervised by full-time, physically present administrators acting on authority delegated by school boards" (Lortie, 1975, p. 4).

Education and the teaching profession have continued to grow and develop during the past half century, but that growth and development have been largely along the lines of the early years of the century (Lortie, 1975). As scientific management **per se** has been largely renounced by American industry for its simplicity and failure to take into account the individual and group needs of workers, so, too, have schools grown away from the concept. But the residual centralization, bureaucratic structure, and predetermined distinctions between teaching and administrative roles have remained pretty much intact, despite the growth of unions and their ability in many cases to constrain day-to-day administrative interference with the autonomy of individual teachers (Lortie, 1975).

Two significant points made by Lortie can conclude this brief historical overview and lead us to a more sociological review of the role of the teacher in American public schools. Despite the growth of bureaucracy and administrative control over teachers, at least in the formal structure of schools, Lortie points out (1975, p. 14):

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> Teachers's work, in short, was not radically altered by the development of the multiple-unit school. The principalship emerged, of course, and the beginnings of a hierarchy of officials took place. As before, the teacher continued to work largely alone with particular students but under the general surveillance of a full-time administrator appointed by the board of education.

This will recur as a major thematic point throughout the remainder of this paper.

Finally, Lortie (1969, p. 19) takes note of the willingness of teachers to accept the limited role assigned to them by the system:

> The current situation reflects the centuries during which teachers were defined solely as employees. It is interesting that teachers have not challenged their formal subordination; unlike most who claim professional status, teachers have not contested the right of persons outside the occupation to govern their technical affairs.

A Sociological View

While history helps to trace the development of the American public school as an institution and the role of teachers within that institution, a more sociological view helps to clarify the authority relationships within the school and the dialectical relationship between teacher recruitment and teacher role within the authority structure of the school.

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Max Weber's seminal work, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization (1947), is a good place to begin this examination. Weber develops here a theory of three ideal types of authority. The first is **charismatic authority.** The charismatic leader justifies his or her domination (which Weber defines as a power relationship in which the ruler believes in his or her right to rule, and the ruled consider it their duty to obey) by reference to extraordinary deeds. Disciples of charismatic leaders have faith in the person of the leader. Charismatic forms of domination do not require a specific or sophisticated administrative apparatus. While Weber traces much of the historical development of authority to charismatic domination, it is of little concern for purposes of understanding teachers as employees in American public schools.

Weber's second ideal type of authority is **traditional authority.** The traditional leader derives his or her authority from inherited status or custom. Subjects obey out of personal loyalty or respect for the traditional status of the leader. Weber points to two types of administrative apparatus for enforcing the authority of traditional leaders. First is patrimonial, in which public officials are personal retainers of the leader and dependent upon him or her for remuneration. Second is feudal, in which officials are more autonomous, but obey as a reflection of an oath of fealty to the leader. While the analogy may be somewhat strained, we might benefit from thinking about the simple structures of colonial and, to some degree, pre-Civil War, schools as being operated on a model of traditional authority, in which teachers served as feudal officials in a structure controlled by community leaders.

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The third ideal type of authority for Weber is **legal authority.** Legal authority does not derive from the person or the tradition of the leader, but rather from the procedurally proper enactment of rules. In a system of legal domination, both ruler and ruled must agree on the procedures, including the procedures by which the ruler comes to a position of domination. Weber calls the typical administrative apparatus of a system of legal authority bureaucracy. A bureaucracy is arranged hierarchically, with the means of administration concentrated at the top; spheres of jurisdiction are clearly specified; positions are obtained by merit and technical training; officials do not own or privately benefit from the means of administration; and administrative acts are generally promulgated in writing. It is not difficult to see these elements of legal authority and bureaucratic administration in the modern American public school, beginning with the late nineteenth century reforms and continuing to the present day (Lortie, 1975; Retsinas, 1982; Tyack, 1967).

Weber suggests that the movement from charismatic to traditional to legal forms of authority is historical and developmental, further confirming the notion suggested here that the authority structure of public schools has developed historically from a more traditional to a more legal one, and that the patrimonial and feudal forms of administration have given way to a more bureaucratic form.

While Weber argues that bureaucracy is a necessary form for the effective control of complex modern life, it does have problems. For example, Mouzelis notes (1967, p. 19):

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> The impact of such an organisational setting (bureaucracy) on the individual is the extreme limitation of his personal freedom and spontaneity, and his increasing incapacity to understand his own activities in relation to the organisation as a whole.

Further exploration follows of the notion that schools have evolved into structures with legal forms of authority and bureaucratic administrative apparatus. In addition, the relationship between structure and the people within the structure will also be probed.

Carbone (1984) generally supports the notion that schools are bureaucracies and that the adverse effects cited by Mouzelis (1967) can be witnessed in them. He argues that "the teacher's world is dominated by a basic lack of autonomy, alienation, division of labor, and hierarchical social arrangements" (p. 67). Arguing that scholars should conceptualize schools as workplaces, Carbone suggests that teachers have become technocrats, who implement, but do not decide on curriculum, materials, texts, evaluative techniques, and the like. He further argues that the alienation of teachers from their work that results from this condition leads to a general lack of concern about the quality of work.

Sarason cites the large numbers and diversity of children to be taught and the schedule for covering curriculum content as the two major problems faced by teachers today. He goes on to say that "the teacher has little, and more often than not, nothing to say either about numbers and diversity of children in the classroom or the time perspective by which her teaching is governed" (1971, p. 154).

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While it is clear that teachers rarely have a significant role in designing the school's curriculum, selecting materials, scheduling the delivery of the instructional program, grouping students, and the like (e.g., Brophy, 1982; Lortie, 1969, 1975; Sizer, 1984), it is probably too simplistic to argue that the individual teacher does nothing more than implement orders from principals, superintendents, and school boards. Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, and Usdan identified the inherent tension a decade ago (1980, p. 247):

> With school organizations becoming more bureaucratic and school workers becoming more professional, the need to resolve the conflict between hierarchical and colleague control will intensify in the years ahead.

As already noted, Lortie argues that teachers have been willing to accept their subordinate role in the bureaucratic structure of the school, although he, too, sees a tension inherent in the bureaucracy/profession dialectic (1969, pp. 29-30):

> The general status of teaching, the teacher's role and the condition and transmission arrangements of its subculture point to truncated rather than fully realized professionalization. . . . In view of the truncated nature of professionalization among . . . teachers, it seems highly unlikely that collegial ties play a major part in reducing the potency of hierarchical authority.

But if there is a tension between the teacher as a professional and the teacher as an alienated worker in the school bureaucracy, how is it resolved? In general, it would appear that the teacher exercises more authority in his or her own classroom than the teacher as an individual or teachers collectively do in the structure of the school itself.

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Wise, while describing the growing centralization and bureaucratization of schools, says that "teachers translate formal goals (of the system) into personalized objectives" (1979, p. 99). Further, he argues that ". . . individual teachers resist central determination of educational ends and especially means, excessive rationalization of procedures, and goal reduction and reductionism, all of which limit their autonomy" (1979, p. 103). Wise's arguments follow from the notion that schools are "loosely coupled" organizations, as Weick (1976), for example, details.

Teachers engage in this quiet resistance to bureaucratic control in their direct teaching of children in their own classrooms. What is taught is influenced by many factors, of course, including the officially prescribed curriculum, district testing programs, mandated textbooks, opinions of principals, parents, and other teachers (Floden, Porter, Schmidt, Freeman, and Schwille, 1981). Floden et al. (1981) find that teachers make deliberate decisions about content to be taught, and that such decisions are most influenced by district objectives and textbooks. It is interesting to note that while teachers make such decisions, the major influences are not other teachers (note Lortie's (1969, 1975) finding that teachers do not spend much professional time together), but sources controlled primarily by school boards and administrators.

A more efficacious picture of teacher decision making is painted by Brophy (1982, p. 3):

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> Teachers are policy brokers rather than mere implementers, working individually or in friendship or departmental groups to adapt policies to the perceived needs of their students. Thus the content actually taught to students is likely to be a compromise between the officially adopted content and the needs of the students as the teachers see them. . . . changes between the official curriculum and the intended curriculum adopted by each teacher usually are introduced deliberately as a result of conscious decision making.

A similar point is made by Schwille, Porter, and Gant (1980, pp. 29-30):

> A bottom-up approach, without undue emphasis on formal organization, allows for considerable teacher autonomy. From this perspective, the teacher's decisions are not, in essence, a matter of saying yes or no to hierarchical directives and their intended outputs.
>
> * * *
>
> teachers . . . have enough discretion for their teaching to be influenced by their own beliefs of what schooling ought to be. But at the same time, teachers will follow (or be constrained to follow) certain external pressures from without.

All of this *seems* confusing and potentially contradictory. Are schools bureaucracies in which teachers, as alienated workers, routinely implement curriculum decisions of others? Or are schools loosely coupled organizations in which teachers make conscious decisions about curriculum implementation? In a sense, both are accurate reflections. It is helpful to look at schools as representative of the legal form of authority outlined by Weber, with a bureaucratic administrative apparatus. Within this structure, teachers assert their professionalism and autonomy in instructional decisions in their own classrooms. Lortie portrays the situation this way (1969, pp. 35-36):

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> Caring less about school-wide than classroom affairs, the teacher is not reluctant to grant the principal hegemony over those matters which do not bear directly upon her teaching activities. . . . The teacher may participate . . . in committees which deal with school-wide matters, but since these occupy the fringes of her concern, such participation does little to intensify relationships with colleagues.

In concluding this section, it should be noted that these school-wide fringe elements to which Lortie refers may well be central to the teacher's ability to teach children. We should recall, for example, Sarason's (1971) point about the difficulties teachers experience as a result of the substantial numbers and diversity of students they must reach and the time constraints arbitrarily imposed on them by curriculum planners. If anything, these sorts of problems have increased since Sarason's studies (e.g., Boyer, 1983; Sizer, 1984). Rarely are teachers in positions to influence the resolution of such problems, and many of those with the skills and desire to participate meaningfully in such school-wide matters leave the profession, as we shall see below.

It is the teacher's willingness to claim autonomy based solely upon the ability to make instructional decisions in a single classroom, in isolation from colleagues, that helps reinforce the bureaucratic structure of schools and the teacher's own very limited role in the school's authority structure. As long as those individual instructional decisions are more influenced by district curriculum objectives and mandated texts than by colleagues (Floden et al., 1981), Lortie's (1969) description of the teaching profession as "truncated" will continue to be accurate.

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These issues will be considered in somewhat greater depth in the following discussion of teacher recruitment, rewards, and retention, and the dialectical relationship between those issues and the authority structure of the school.

Recruitment, Rewards, Retention

The recruitment and retention of teachers by the public schools have been the subject of numerous studies, and they have resulted in similar, usually dismal, findings (e.g., Chapman and Hutcheson, 1982; Pavalko, 1970; Roth, 1983; Schlechty and Vance, 1983; Vance and Schlechty, 1982; Weaver, 1979). Recruitment into the profession acts almost like a reverse funnel, according to most of these studies, with those high school students choosing college education majors being among the least academically able, with those education majors seeking teaching jobs being among the least able of the majors, with those accepting teaching jobs being among the least able of the job seekers, and with those remaining in the profession for more than three years being among the least able of those who become teachers. Ability here is measured by standardized tests such as the Scolastic Aptitude Test, American College Testing Program, Graduate Record Examinations, and the National Longitudinal Survey, verbal ability, college grade point average, and the like.

Arguing for the importance of attracting and retaining the most academically talented professionals, Schlechty and Vance suggest that there

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are features of schools as workplaces that often discourage such efforts (1983, p. 178):

> These features are (1) the tendency for all salary increases to come within the first third of a teacher's working life; (2) the lack of substantially different career stages within the job of classroom teacher; (3) the tendency of schools to militate against shared decision-making and problem-centered analytical discussion among adults; and (4) the tendency for the informal culture of schools, which reflects an ethos of nurturance and growth, to be dominated by a management structure that is punishment-centered and bureaucratic.

While there seems to be growing willingness within the education community at least to discuss extrinsic recruitment/reward/retention factors, such as salary and job mobility, this paper is more concerned with the latter two features mentioned by Schlechty and Vance.

This paper has so far argued that schools are institutions with a legal authority structure and bureaucratic administrative apparatus. As such, decisions are made by those in management positions, not by teachers, except insofar as the individual teacher determines, in the privacy of his or her own classroom, the degree to which such decisions will be implemented. The paper has also pointed out that such decision making by teachers tends to be individual, that teachers do not work together to evolve curricular decisions. This tendency derives, in part at least, from the historical autonomy of the teacher. Whether this independence of action in the classroom, accompanied by lack of work with colleagues, represents autonomy or isolation needs to be probed further.

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Lortie (1975) has found that teachers would rather use any available marginal time on their individual instruction of their own students, rather than on school-wide matters such as curriculum or personnel development. He argues that this is the case because teachers find their greatest rewards and satisfactions in "reaching" students -- their core assignment.

It is reasonable to assume that most prospective teachers know more about the potential rewards and satisfactions of teaching than is true in other professions, since all prospective teachers have been in daily contact with experienced teachers for years before making career choices. It is therefore not surprising that those who are attracted to and remain in teaching are those who are rewarded by individual contact with students and by independent work, rather than by collegial activity aimed at system improvement, for example (Chapman and Hutcheson, 1982; Chapman and Lowther, 1982; Lortie, 1975). This makes dialectical sense, given the structure of schools and the real possibilities for success and satisfaction available to most teachers. According to Chapman and Lowther (1982, p. 246):

> Career satisfaction is related to **not** assigning value to things that are hard to achieve or for which there is no clear external reward, given the structure of the schools.

Schlechty and Vance argue that these tendencies are not in the interests of improving schools (1983, p. 479):

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> Almost all the research on effective schools indicates that schools in which teachers engage in a great deal of job-related discussion and share in decisions regarding instructional programs are more effective than schools in which decisions are made by rule-bound bureaucratic procedures. Unfortunately, studies also found relatively few such schools, and the emergence of such schools depends more on historical accidents and the personalities of principals than on conscious policy.

Who stays in the profession? Studies by Chapman and Hutcheson (1982) indicate that those who remain in teaching have better organizational skills, while those who leave have better analytical skills. Those who stay in teaching are "particularly skilled at explaining, supervising, and organizing," according to Chapman and Hutcheson (1982, p. 103). Another of their findings is that those retained in the profession tend to work alone, while those who leave often take jobs requiring collaboration and teamwork.

Some studies also indicate that women experience greater job satisfaction and are more likely to remain in teaching than men (e.g., Chapman and Lowther, 1982). They suggest that this "may be related . . . to the time teaching allows for home and family" (Chapman and Lowther, 1982, p. 245). Sykes (1983) reaches a similar conclusion. It appears that the profession attracts teachers who are rewarded by working alone rather than in colleague groups, and who prefer to make limited time commitments to their work, and that such teachers then enter an authority structure which reinforces the desire to work alone and that imposes few time demands for activities other than teaching **per se.**

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The issue of autonomy, independence, and isolation is illuminated somewhat by studies by Chapman and Hutcheson (1982, p. 104):

> Those who left teaching indicated salary, job autonomy, and, in the case of those leaving elementary teaching, the chance to contribute to important decisions, to be most important. This finding tends to support the earlier speculations that being alone in a classroom with students is not what is typically meant by job autonomy.

Chapman and Lowther have also found (1982) the ability to speak effectively and persuade others, which are central to the teaching activity, are positively related to teacher satisfaction and retention. The relationship between leadership skills and professional development and teacher satisfaction and retention is more ambivalent (Chapman and Lowther, 1982, p. 246):

> Teachers who assigned more importance to their leadership activities as a basis for judging their own professional success were less satisfied with their career. Yet, those who operated in a leadership role were more satisfied with their career. Similarly the importance teachers assigned to learning new things was negatively related to career satisfaction, yet teachers who actually "learned new things" had greater satisfaction with their career. . . . Leadership and new learning bring few external rewards within the school; they are not particularly effective ways for teachers to advance their careers. . . . (Nonetheless) it appears that increased opportunities for teachers to exercise leadership and to continue their learning might foster greater career satisfaction, despite evidence that teachers may not seem overtly to value those activities.

If it is true that teaching recruits those who aspire to work alone, who wish to limit their time commitment to the profession and their col-

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laboration with colleagues, and if it is true that the authority structure of the school reinforces these tendencies by rewarding the very behaviors teachers value, what happens to those who remain in teaching? Sarason's studies suggest that the lack of interaction with other adults in schools, the tendency to teach the same subjects over protracted periods of time, and the tendency to teach similar students from one year to the next, result in a situation in which ". . . each day is very much like every other day" (Sarason, 1971, p. 162). He finds that most veteran teachers are no longer excited by their work and rarely experience personal growth from it. Newer teachers, according to Sarason, are more excited, but have no expectation of meeting goals of intellectual growth through teaching. He concludes (1971, pp. 166-67):

> **If teaching becomes neither terribly interesting nor exciting to many teachers, can one expect them to make learning interesting or exciting to children?** If teaching becomes a routine, predictable experience, does this not have inevitable consequences for life in the classroom? . . . children and teachers show most of the effects of routinized thinking and living.

As the age in which we live becomes increasingly focused upon the ability of people and institutions to adapt to change; as information expands beyond our grasp at exponential rates; as the ability to understand and synthesize complex and often unpredictable variables becomes the key to leadership, even survival, the Weberian model of legal authority and bureaucratic administration appear increasingly dysfunctional.

Schools, of all the institutions in society, should not be routinized. Teachers, of all the professions in society, should be able to

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find intellectual development and challenge in their work. Otherwise, schools and teachers will likely become increasingly dysfunctional in preparing young people to inhrerit their uncertain futures.

While recent efforts to reform schools and the teaching profession take cognizance of the need to upgrade the profession, they concentrate primarily on extrinsic issues. Given the state and federal focus of these efforts, this is neither surprising nor inappropriate, since neither state nor federal officials can hope to have much impact on the culture of a given school or on the relationships among its members.

But if the authority structure and culture of the school require reform, if the role of the teacher needs to be redefined in order to attract and retain teachers who are able to prepare youngsters for lives of uncertainty and for future leadership roles, then attention must be paid at the local level to reconceptualizing the school as a workplace and reconceptualizing the workplace as a place of learning.

While this should be a reasonably comfortable task for professional educators, it would be wrong to be sanguine about the likelihood of this challenge being met. In order to advance the discussion somewhat, the author would put forth one possible approach, rooted in the fairly recent literature of organization theory and organization development.

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Organization Development -- A Modest Proposal

While schools often operate as if they were mere collectivities of individual personnel with predetermined roles and responsibilities, those who would improve the schools usually attempt to implement systemwide changes. While Mrs. Jones may teach her fourth graders the mathematics she thinks they need, the school administration approaches elementary mathematics curriculum development as if it were more than the sum of individual teacher judgments. At the level of curriculum development or personnel development, the schools recognize their own systemic nature. Unfortunately, reformers are not always sufficiently aware of organization theory (e.g., Miles and Schmuck, 1971), do not understand the inherent interdependence of the components of the school as a **system** (e.g., Beer, 1980; Henry, 1980), and are not prepared to work effectively with both staff who see themselves as autonomous and a systemic whole, in which what parades as autonomy is rarely more than alienation.

Miles and Schmuck suggest that many reforms have failed in the past because reformers have not fully appreciated the organizational nature of schools. They write that (1980, p. 1):

> schools are primarily **organizations**, and . . . many if not most efforts at educational reforms have collapsed or have been absorbed without effect precisely because of the limited attention given to the organizational context in which the reforms have been attempted. Any major innovation in curriculum or instructional techniques implies a change in the "culture" of the school. The relationship between teachers and administrators, for example, is apt to change. . . . authority

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relationships, communication networks, status groupings, and even friendship cliques are forced to change.

To view schools as organizations, it is necessary to understand the school as a system, including its external environment, which might be thought of as a supersystem within which the school system fits; relevant inputs such as trained personnel, finances, curriculum knowledge, demands by the community, and the like; anticipated outputs, such as well educated high school graduates, satisfied professional staff, cultural activities for the community, and countless others; the processes for transforming inputs into outputs, such as curriculum development efforts, classroom instruction of pupils, staff training programs, football team and student concert practices, and the like; and feedback mechanisms to allow the system to learn and adapt (Katz and Kahn, 1966; March and Simon, 1958). Ackoff writes (1981, p. 16):

> The essential properties of a system taken as a whole derive from the **interactions** of its parts, not their actions taken separately. Therefore, **when a system is taken apart it loses its essential properties.**

This must be the starting point of our efforts to reconceptualize schools as workplaces and workplaces as places of learning. Unfortunately, the structure of schools and the way most of their members see themselves do not readily lend themselves to such an effort.

Within the general systems view of organizations, schools would most appropriately be viewed as **social** systems. This model focuses on the human side of an organization, which is clearly at the heart of the school as an organization. Beer (1980) stresses the need for organiza-

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tions that aspire to be healthy to exhibit "congruence" or "fit" among eight organizational components: environment, organizational outcomes, human outputs, organizational behaviors and processes, organizational structures, people, organizational culture, and the dominant coalition. This paper has suggested that the organizational structures and many of the behaviors and processes of schools are dysfunctional, in that they reinforce and reward individual action without regard to the systemic nature of the school or the effects of such individual action on the system.

One way to get at such dysfunctions in an effort to improve organizational health is a process that has come to be known as organization development. While the definitions of the term vary (e.g., Beckhard, 1969; Beer, 1980; French and Bell, 1972; Miles and Schmuck, 1976), there is basic agreement about what organization development is, how it works, and how it can benefit organizations. Miles and Schmuck, for example, summarize the concept of a "planned and sustained effort to apply behavioral science for system improvement, using reflexive, self-analytic methods" (1971, p. 2).

Organization development begins with the identification of some systemic or organizational problem and the acknowledgement of the problem by those in authority. This is followed by the collection of data by and from members of the organization, feedback of the data to members of the organization, diagnosis of the problem by members of the organization (based upon the collected data), action planning by organization members

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and management, implementation of changes as indicated, evaluation, and institutionalization of the change process.

The entire process focuses attention on people in the organization and the organization's environment. It is designed to make the organization stronger in relation to that environment, in part by helping organization members to become healthier. This increased health is a result of participating with colleagues in a self-analytic process aimed at both personal and organizational development (Brooks, 1982; Miles and Schmuck, 1971). This is an opportunity few teachers have in schools today, although there is some evidence of success in those schools which have undertaken such efforts (Brooks, 1982; Fullan and Miles, 1980; Schmuck and Miles, 1971).

It is reasonable to anticipate that school people will be skeptical of the suggestion that they try to apply organization development techniques to the organization called school. After all, the techniques were, for the most part, developed in industrial settings which are, in many ways, different from schools. Miles and Schmuck try to address some of the uniquenesses of schools. They point out, for example, that (1971, p. 16):

> schools, more than industrial organizations, suffer from ambiguity and diversity of goals. Such goal diffuseness has often resulted in conflict between a school and its community environment and in difficulties in measuring goal attainment. . . .
>
> * * * vulnerability, . . . the probability of being subjected to pressures incompatible with one's goals, . . . encourages subjugation to the environment, discrepancies between school goals and environmental demands,

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> and inadequate provision of financial resources. . . . the low level of autonomy and the weak knowledge base of school personnel . . .promotes status insecurity, ritualistic use of procedures, and scanty communication among staff members.

While these factors may be seen as impediments to the development of schools as organizations, they can also be seen as opportunities, which is precisely what Miles and Schmuck (1971) suggest. The very weaknesses present a specific agenda for change activities, such as the need for fuller, more direct and open communications within schools and the development of teams of professionals which are truly interdependent.

The argument put forth here does not require a recitation of specific cases in which organization development efforts have been tried in schools successfully; it is sufficient to take note of such efforts. If we can view schools as organizations within which people work, and if we can better understand both the social systemic nature of those organizations and their relations with their external environments, it will be possible to begin to construct approaches to change that will make schools healthier places.

As Miles and Schmuck put it (1971, p. 19):

> The target . . . is the school as a social system -- a living interpersonal culture. As an organization, can it learn . . . how to become more self-renewing, how to gain greater contact with its environment, and how to become more responsive to the desires and interests of its members? Can schools become more like communities for growing their members than like machines for processing them?

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Conclusion

From the traditionally structured schools of colonial America, in which authority was possessed by community leaders who hired and supervised teachers directly, the institutions of public education have become far more centralized and bureaucratic. Weber's model of legal authority fits the modern American school, in which the teacher has become more of an alienated worker than an independent professional.

The alienation, which is sometimes called "autonomy," presents itself both physically and socially. Each teacher has his or her own classroom, within which he or she exercises whatever control is available -- physically apart from colleagues or administrators. Further, this paper has discussed the unwillingness, disinterest, or inability of teachers in most schools to work effectively as members of colleague groups concerned with school-wide issues, even when those issues impinge directly on teachers' ability to teach effectively.

We have also seen that the teaching profession attracts and retains primarily those who experience rewards from "reaching" students, that is, from being good instructors. The schools rarely attract and even more rarely retain those who feel rewarded by participating in the life of the school, by devoting their efforts to solving systemic problems, by help-

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ing to establish an environment within which good instruction would be fostered.

This relationship is dialectical. Since the schools attract few teachers who desire to participate in the life of the school qua school, it is easy for the school to establish a reward structure that ignores these members of its community. This is particularly true, since ignoring their needs helps foster the existing authority structure of the school, in which the teacher's authority is limited to implementing curriculum in his or her classroom. On the other hand, a school structured so as to minimize the opportunities for professional development outside the individual classroom is unlikely to attract, much less retain, people who are interested in such development. (It is interesting to remember the finding of Chapman and Lowther (1982) that those teachers who actually experience a sense of participation outside the classroom value that experience and cite it as a reason for remaining in the profession.)

One of the reasons that schools are not the challenging or exciting places of learning desired by critics is that teachers often do not have or have lost a sense of professional, intellectual excitement themselves (Boyer, 1983; Sarason, 1971; Sizer, 1984).

While this should not surprise us, since the condition of teachers is not unlike the condition of alienated workers in other sectors of the economy, the fact often goes undetected because of teachers' complicity with the authority structure of the school. The scenario goes something like this: the principal, superintendent, and school board can establish

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the curriculum, select textbooks, assign teachers to classes, assign students to teachers and classes, and impose whatever time constraints they require, as long as the teacher is permitted to teach what he or she thinks is important in the way he or she thinks is best. This is not unlike the complicity between students and teachers identified by Sizer (1984).

But this scenario is highly problematic for schools and for the future of public schooling in our society. First, teachers abdicate responsibility for some of the really critical curriculum and instruction issues in return for a seeming escape from the direct imposition of administrative authority in the individual classroom. By calling this alienation by the professional sounding term, "autonomy," the system masks what it is really about. Second, as Schlechty and Vance note above, effective schools are those "in which teachers engage in a great deal of job-related discussion and share in decisions regarding instructional programs" (1983, p. 479). To the degree that this participation in the life of the school community does not take place, the school community is deprived of the collective wisdom of its members, and each of its members is deprived of the opportunity to develop professionally. To the degree that all this leads to a lack of academic excitement in schools, our children are robbed of the fullness of intellectual opportunity we could make available to them.

If Ackoff (1981) is right, and I think he is, the future will be even more uncertain and unstable than the present and the immediate past. In order to survive and thrive in such an environment, organizations and

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people will have to develop the capacities of continual learning, adaptation, and self-renewal.

Public schools surely should be among the institutions prepared to meet that challenge. Teachers surely should be in the lead in the creation of learning, adapting, self-renewing organizations.

But we need leaders within schools today, both teachers and administrators, to find ways to reconceptualize the school as a place where teachers work and simultaneously reconceptualize workplaces as places of learning, adaptation, and self-renewal.

We need not fear that this will lead to the creation of new authority structures in schools. Surely it will. We need to fear that our failure to take this challenge seriously will result in the continuing failure of schools to attract the very kinds of teachers who can help young people attain the skills of learning, adaptation, and self-renewal that they will need in order to secure their -- and ultimately our -- future.

This paper has been an effort to outline the background of these issues and provide a glimpse of one possible approach for schools to follow.

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